

**To Mayor Fred Eisenberger, Hamilton City Councillors, and Hamilton Police Chief Eric Girt:**

We, the undersigned, are trans and gender-diverse residents of Hamilton. We voted for you, we live in your city, we work in your city. We belong here, the same as anyone else, no matter who they may be. Recent events in the city have left us feeling unwanted and unwelcome by you as our elected and chosen leadership. Collectively, we are angry, frustrated, and hurt by your choices of action, including your choice of inaction.

The flashpoint for our anger is, of course, the violence at Hamilton Pride 2019. We are angered not only by the alt-right bigots trying to attack our celebration; we are angered more by Hamilton Police's decision not to defend our vulnerable trans and queer population from these attacks. You were given advance notice as to when and where the alt-right Pride protest would be taking place; you did not listen. When violence occurred, when we and our allies were being beaten, **you** stood aside and watched. You only moved in when we dared to defend ourselves and fight back, and you escorted the alt-right protestors out of Gage Park. **Hamilton Police cared more about protecting the rights of bigoted, hateful speech by the alt-right than it cared about protecting the bodies and lives of trans and queer people peacefully celebrating.** If not for the actions by trans and queer people and our allies, there would have been nothing holding back the alt-right from invading the actual premises of the Pride event and committing further violence. As it stands, the bigots tried to attack several members of our community (including children and youths) leaving Pride. **You** chose to let them go free. **You did not defend us or our rights as Hamilton residents.**

Do not forget either that the current status of Pride is due to your cowardice. You have failed to confront the alt-right groups mobilizing in Hamilton; you have let them publicly demonstrate on City of Hamilton property for over two years. During this time, neither the city, nor its leadership, nor Hamilton Police, have taken any effort to stop these alt-right groups from fraternizing, or demonstrating in public spaces. Their demagoguery is hateful and hurtful. It is not Charter-protected speech, and by allowing it to continue **you have failed us as residents of Hamilton once again.** Hamilton Pride no longer includes a march because you have given the space to the alt-right protestors instead. We are unwilling to appear tolerant of their hate in any way or form, and we cannot march to celebrate our identities in front of a background of bigotry.

These events are just the most recent in your demonstrated unwillingness to make Hamilton a safe space for us as trans residents. Your administration lost a Human Rights Tribunal case when you tried to ban a trans woman from using her chosen washroom on city property; as part of the settlement, you agreed to write and publish a new non-discrimination policy against trans and gender diverse residents. Years later, that policy is still delayed and inadequate: **you have shown that you do not care about our rights as residents of Hamilton.** Instead, you have employed and kept employed Marc Lemire, a publicly admitted Neo-Nazi; when his employment was discovered the city began an "investigation." **If being publicly hateful towards marginalized, oppressed peoples in Hamilton is not grounds for immediate dismissal, what is?** We told you that we were uncomfortable flying the queer and trans Pride flags at City Hall while Lemire was still employed. You disregarded our wishes as a community and held a flag raising anyway, disgracing the power and symbolism of our Pride flags and creating hollow, fake, performative allyship for yourselves.

When your own LGBTQ advisory committee members spoke up about your hurtful actions, you tried to dismiss them to avoid any criticism. When that same committee held a public meeting to discuss your shameful treatment of queer residents in Hamilton, you attended in full police uniform and attempted to intimidate the speakers. You complained that you were denied a recruiting booth at Hamilton Pride, and insinuated that your own officers did not defend us because you felt hurt by that denial. We refuse your privilege and attempts to claim our spaces. You do not decide who is allowed to have a booth at Pride; the queer and trans community of